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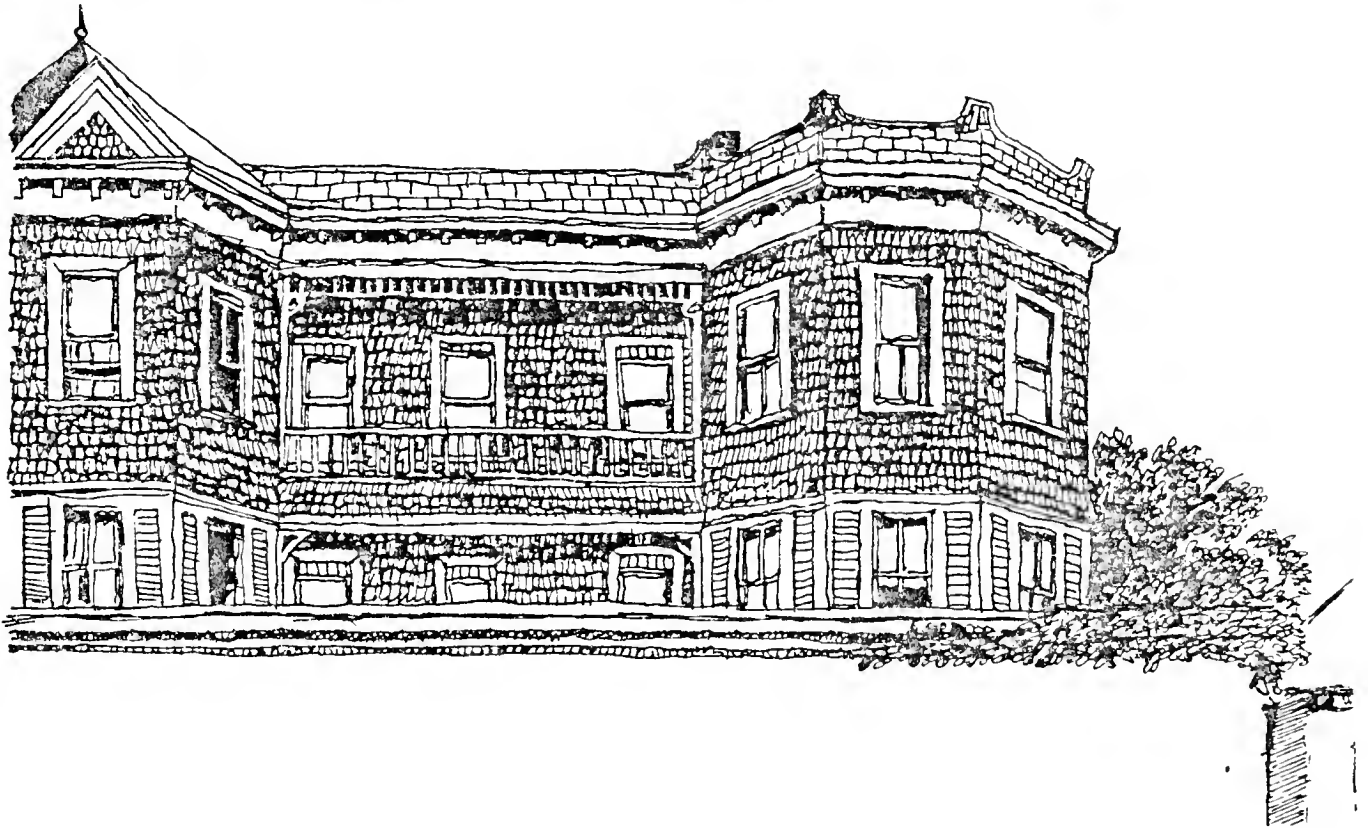


Hyde Square Facade Improvement Program

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Commercial Revitalization Program



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Introduction

While the quality of streets, sidewalks and other public places is primarily the concern of the municipal government, responsibility for the quality and character of structures and shops falls to private building owners and occupants. Facade treatment, storefronts, signing, hardware and displays have significant visual impact. When the design and treatment of an entire building and its shops responds to the character of the surrounding structures as well as its own quality, it can contribute to the total quality of the street. If surroundings are ignored it is to the detriment of all.

While in some instances mutual cooperation means restraint, there is ample latitude to vary structures, storefronts and signing to express the nature of the business and the identity of the owner without impairing the surroundings.

The intent of this program is to develop the potential visual continuity of whole blocks and units of buildings as well as emphasizing individual buildings and shops. With effective participation, the Centre Street business area can create a consistent image, allowing small businesses to compete effectively with other shopping areas and centers.

As the occupancy and types of stores change over time or decisions are made to renovate, opportunities occur to make significant improvements in the streetscape. Sensitive renovation and new construction is not difficult and may often be less expensive than standard modernization and renovation techniques.

Individual Storefront

Individual Storefront Context

The unique identity of the Hyde Square shopping district is based on a unity of design, it cannot be achieved where there is a chaos of discordant building elements and signs. On the other hand, unity should not lead to a sterile sameness of all the buildings. Unity is derived from a simple set of underlying systems that bind buildings together into a larger composition. Within this, there is room for variety and accent. The foundation of this set of ordering systems is the individual building facade.

The assets of the existing facade should be used to the greatest advantage. The design must integrate the pieces of the facade into a strong composition. The best approach is to remove conflicting attachments and modifications and to reinforce the original style of the building. Successive remodelings of some structures will have added layers of material to the facade. These sheathings should be removed.

- Respect the basic form of the building. The form or shape of the building is the background for the details of the facade. These details include windows, shop entrances, or special decorations. Relate ground floors to upper floors by aligning openings on the first floor with the second floor windows.
- Use original materials when possible, or select new materials that are compatible with the existing ones. Much of the visual interest and character of a building is expressed in the original materials.
- Use proportion that are compatible. Specific proportions are repeated frequently along the street and give a sense of familiarity and order to many of the individual buildings. Facade improvements should respect these proportions. Avoid mixing styles of differing proportions within the same facade.

- Maintain existing decorations during facade renovations. With many building styles, it is appropriate to accentuate these decorative elements with paint colors that contrast with the background.
- Do not try to make a building look older than it is. Most reproduced details are made at an improper scale and their application to a facade results in an awkward visual effect.

Commercial Block

Block Facade Context

Just as a single facade should be designed to create a unified image, so should entire blocks be designed to establish a sense of continuity on the street.

Commercial streets have the standard components of an urban environment: rows of buildings on both sides of the street, sidewalks, traffic and parking lanes, and a scattering of street furnishings. The most commanding portion of the scene is the block of commercial structures. They form a wall - an edge - that defines the limits of the street. That wall is a composite of solids and voids, of structure and opening. There is a pattern of windows and doors on the street, and the strength of the visual continuity of the street is increased or diminished by the strength of this pattern. It is possible to maintain the identity of each building and business while reinforcing this continuity.

In contrast to facade design, block design takes into consideration the entire street and the surrounding area. It is concerned with the relationship of each building's facade to the others.

- Respect the proportions of existing facades. New construction and facade renovations must fit within the building frame and repeat the rhythms that already exist in the facade windows and openings.
- Use materials already employed in the block. Brick and concrete as well as wood, marble and concrete block establish the vocabulary of building materials.

- Mount signs to establish lines along the block; signs should be positioned on building faces so that they align with others in the block. When a natural sign band exists on a building facade (such as those created by cornices above storefronts) this must be the primary determinant of sign position, even when this band does not align with others in the block.



Existing conditions, 319 - 321 Centre Street.



Possible Facade Improvements, 319 - 321 Centre Street.

Approaches

There are several approaches to commercial revitalization and facade improvements. These approaches can be characterized by four levels of involvement: removal, repair and maintenance, renovation and reconstruction, and new (infill) construction. These levels of effort are part of an overall strategy for improvements and should be thought of as an additive process -- each playing an important part of the complete effort, and each building upon the results of what has been done previously.

1

Removal

- 1.1 Removal is an approach that is an easy process to complete and one which will have a significant effect. Merchants taking part in the Commercial Revitalization Program must, when applicable to their building, make the following removal efforts:
- 1.2 - the removal and dismantling of old, unused sign brackets, frames and hardware on the roof, cornice and front wall of the building. Along with this "unbolting", any resulting holes and damage to the building must be repaired.
- 1.3 - the removal of false front, siding, and non-conforming signs and advertising from the facade of the building. This includes formstone, fascia panels, aluminum siding, metal panels, mansard roofs, and any other attachments that cover and disrupt the original detailing and materials of the building.
- 1.4 - the removal, dismantling, and painting over of signs which, through a change of tenants or merchandising, are no longer relevant to the store.

- 1.5 - the removal of temporary window signs and displays that are no longer needed, and to conform to the Boston Sign Code.
- 1.6 This level of involvement, removal, can be for the most part a do-it-yourself, inexpensive operation which can be undertaken by the owner or tenant.

2

Repair and Maintenance

- 2.1 Repair and maintenance are two procedures that have an important effect on the overall visual quality of the street, and are efforts that should be part of a proprietor's yearly routine, but are often neglected. By continually servicing and maintaining a facade, storefront, or sign, storeowners can avoid major expenses later. Repainting and refinishing woodwork, signs and trim, cleaning signs and replacing electric bulbs, patching concrete and brickwork, and simply cleaning the facade and windows, are a few of the tasks that must be part of an ongoing process.
- 2.2 Any storeowner or tenant taking part in the Program, in addition to working on neglected maintenance procedures, must also repair and replace damaged building components that have resulted from excessive and extreme weathering. This includes replacing missing and damaged building details, repairing and repainting of brickwork, and the patching and sealing of concrete and stone work. In addition, either the cleaning or painting of building facades should be considered.
- 2.3 New storefronts and facade renovations should be designed with maintenance in mind. Easy access for windows, sign and facade cleaning should be considered as well as a careful selection of durable materials and easily maintained details.

3

Renovation and Reconstruction

- 3.1 When a new tenant or merchant moves into an existing building or when an existing store wants to redesign and replace their storefront the process is one of renovation and reconstruction. A new design must be developed for the new use which will fit into the existing building structure.
- 3.2 The guidelines to be followed during this process are detailed elsewhere in these guidelines under Individual Storefront Context, and Block Facade Context, but are summarized in the following points:
 - 3.3 - new storefronts should fit within the building frame as formed by columns, piers and cornices.
 - 3.4 - architectural detailing must not be destroyed or covered
 - 3.5 - materials should work with the existing building materials
 - 3.6 - new storefronts must relate to upper levels
 - 3.7 - a consistent location for signs must be used.
- 3.8 In addition to respecting these design guidelines, appropriate removal and repair procedures must be undertaken during the renovation and reconstruction of storefronts.

4

New Construction

- 4.1 There are cases in which a gap occurs in the streetscape. This break is particularly felt as one moves along the sidewalk. This opening usually results from the removal of a building

that once matched the line of shapes on the street. If new construction respects its street context, the block will be strengthened and the scale of the sidewalk experience is restored.

- 4.2 The following general guidelines for new construction must be followed:
- 4.3 - new construction should be a product of its own time and not a copy of an older architectural style.
- 4.4 - the massing of a new building must maintain the existing wall line of the street facade
- 4.5 - the cornice line of existing buildings should be maintained or, at a minimum, incorporated in the new design
- 4.6 - entire blocks are to be considered as almost a single facade - materials, colors, rhythm of elements, and common details must be recognized.
- 4.7 The design and construction of new buildings is a complex process, involving many considerations. Due to the importance of new infill construction, the services and advice of a professional designer and the involvement of the Design Review Panel are of prime importance.

Building Elements

A

Doors and Entrances

- A.1 Most of the doors to shops in Hyde Square are standard aluminum and glass doors which have replaced wooden doors in the course of past remodeling efforts, although wooden doors are still common. During remodeling, doors should be selected to harmonize with the building facade. Avoid conflicts of style: a "colonial" door should not be added to a twentieth century masonry building.
- A.2 During facade renovations, original wooden "storefront" doors should be retained through repair and refinishing. Aluminum doors should, like window frames, be chosen to work with the color of building materials. Dark finishes (black, bronze, grey, brown) with brick and dark materials, "silver" and bright finishes with tile and glossy materials, and either finish with concrete buildings.
- A.3 New doorways should be in a recessed entrance-way. This forms a protected area for customers between inside and outside. Doors must be recessed at least a distance equal to the width of the door - a distance sufficient to keep the door from travelling over the sidewalk when open.

B

Facade Lighting

- B.1 Store facades do not need separate lighting. At night, display windows should be lit from within to make the merchandise display a form of store advertising and to add light and interest to the sidewalk and street. Facade lighting should come from the building sign, the display windows, and lighting within all recessed entrances. The Hyde Square Design Review Panel recommends that as much lighting as feasible be included in all facade improvements to add more light to the street.

C

Security

- C.1 Security is a major concern of most Hyde Square merchants. Vandalism and theft are the primary problems facing store owners. The most effective solution to these prob-

lems is the installation of grilles to the storefront. Grilles are either the type that roll down from above, or the accordion type which comes from the side.

- C.2 If security grilles are installed as part of a new storefront, they must be incorporated into the store design and not simply attached to the surface. Roll down open grilles are preferred because they allow store displays and the store interior to be seen from the street. Accordion screens must be concealed when not in use, and solid type roll down grilles should be painted to improve their appearance when in use.
- C.3 Permanently attached open grilles will be allowed only on windows 36 inches or smaller in height. Demountable grilles may be used under the Program but must be removed and stored out of sight during business hours.

D

Decorative Details

- D.1 Most commercial facades have decorative details which occur the entire length of the block, establishing an architectural continuity. This continuity is defined by a uniform molding or coping line, decorative details or by columns and piers which give rhythm and scale to the storefront of a building. Some of these architectural details have been covered with false roof fronts or large sign panels. Such additions destroy the architectural continuity of the building and detract from the entire streetscape. Details and ornamentation are a vital part of the commercial area's visual character and should not be abandoned during renovation.
- D.2 Architectural details of the building frame must be retained and enhanced during facade renovations. New storefronts and signs must not be designed to cover significant building detailing. If a detail cannot be maintained or repaired in its original form, it can be modified or simplified to match the original in size and appearance without disturbing the character of the building and storefront.

E

Roofs and Cornices

- E.1 Most one and two story commercial roofs are flat and not visible from the sidewalk and street. Remodelings have introduced flat fascia panels as well as pitched and Mansard roofs which disrupt an otherwise unified facade scheme, this type of treatment must be avoided, and is not allowed under the guidelines. Likewise, the addition of imitation "colonial" pediments to existing cornices and roof lines must be avoided. By revealing the original roof and cornice lines, rather than concealing them, improvements can restore the unity of the facade and relate it to the commercial environment.
- E.2 Cornices are often elaborately ornamental and detailed, emphasizing the horizontal continuity of the street as well as providing a termination to building facades. Most cornices will remain in sound condition with little maintenance. Wooden, brick, metal or softstone cornices must be periodically repaired, patched and painted.

F

Building Equipment

- F.1 Air conditioning units protruding from windows and supported by angle irons obscure attractive facades, are noisy, and have a tendency to drip on pedestrians and customers passing below. Air conditioning units should be placed on rear and side facades when possible, but if the addition of a unit to the street facade is unavoidable, it must be mounted flush with the exterior wall surface. A drain shall be installed to properly carry condensed water away from the unit to the ground.
- F.2 Rooftop mechanical equipment should be lowered beneath the parapet line or must be screened and painted with a color that blends with the roofscape.

- F.3 Street numbers for entrance doors are a small and inexpensive detail that must be included in any facade improvement. At the least, the street address should be located on the main entrance door. Numbers should be in a simple, legible style and can either be painted on or stick-on numbers placed directly on the glass. Fancy styles or script are not allowed.

G Windows

- G.1 The windows of retail stores vary in size and shape depending on the nature of the business as well as the architectural style. Large plate glass windows are indigenous to stores and small mullioned windows are characteristic of taverns. The use of display windows, multi-paned windows, and strip windows will be approved on an individual basis by the Hyde Square Design Review Panel.
- G.2 The windows of retail stores vary in size and shape depending on the nature of the business as well as the architectural style. Large plate glass windows are indigenous to stores and small mullioned windows are characteristic of taverns.
- G.3 When designing new window treatments, it is important to relate the proposed design to the facade of the whole block. Colonial windows with small frames, however attractive, disrupt the continuity of a block facade which is entirely composed of large plate glass windows.
- G.4 When choosing wooden or aluminum replacement windows, pay special attention to their color and finish. Select colored trims to work with the building details. Dark finishes (black, bronze, grey, brown) should be used with brick and dark materials, "silver" and shiny finishes should be used with tile and glossy materials. Either color frame can be used with concrete buildings.
- G.5 Pay attention to the size of replacement windows; stock sizes are not appropriate for renovation if they do not match the original sizes and shapes. Blocking down or filling in older openings to fit standard size sashes is not permitted under the guidelines.

H

Awnings and Canopies

- H.1 Awnings and canopies, however attractive when originally installed, are subject to damage through vandalism and extreme weathering. Due to these factors, awnings and canopies are not allowed under the Facade Improvement Guidelines for stores in Hyde Square. However, the use of awnings and canopies for restaurants and cafes may be permitted, subject to the approval of the Design Review Panel.
- H.2 When the use of awnings and canopies is approved by the Design Review Panel, they must be made of heavy canvas, and must be replaced when weathered, faded or damaged. Aluminum and plastic canopies are not permitted. To extend their useful life, awnings should be of the retractable type to avoid as much damage as possible.

I

Color

- I.1 Color schemes should be chosen to convey the building as a unified facade. Care should be exercised to coordinate the colors of upper stories with the street level storefront. The predominate material in the commercial area are brick and light aggregate concrete, color schemes that will harmonize with these materials should be used. The guidelines for facade improvements in Hyde Square do not restrict the use of any color. However, all proposed color selections must be submitted to, and be approved by, the Hyde Square Design Review Board.
- I.2 In choosing base and trim colors, select the base color of the walls first, then select the trim shades. Accents of contrasting colors can be used to highlight specific architectural details and as an element of interest on a facade.

J

Glazing

- J.1 Glazing materials for storefront renovations must be chosen according to the use contemplated for the shop. Display windows are appropriate for general merchandising, a smaller area of glazing is appropriate for professional offices and service establishments, and even smaller windows for taverns.
- J.2 Wire glass and plastic glazing materials are inappropriate for commercial storefronts and are not permitted under these guidelines. Plate glass and safety glass are acceptable in all locations. Textured glass is acceptable for taverns and clubs, but not for commercial storefronts. Stained glass is acceptable for certain locations such as in transoms, as part of a larger window, or in taverns. Sun control, tinted (smoked), glazing is acceptable for storefront windows, as are roll down, interior sun shades. Mirrored glass is not permitted under the guidelines.

K

Signs

- K.1 To be eligible for assistance under the Facade Improvement Program, all storefront signs must conform to the Boston Sign Code. The following are the major points and limits of the code.
- signs may include only the street number, the name and kinds of business, service or facility conducted on the premises, the year the business was established, a slogan, the hours of operation, time and temperature, and lettering that is part of a trademark.
 - trademarks are limited to no more than 25% of the area of a sign face.
 - any lighting must be continuous, no flashing or blinking lights are permitted
 - all signs must be stationary
 - no signs may extend above the cornice line of the building

- signs attached parallel to a building can project no more than 15 inches from the building surface.
- the top of any sign can be no higher than either 25 feet above grade, the top of sills of the first level of windows above the first story, the lowest point of the roof, or the top of the parapet of one story buildings, whichever is lowest.
- permanent signs on the inside of a window cannot exceed 30% of the total glass area.
- the total area of all signs cannot exceed either 50 square feet or the length of the building's street frontage multiplied by 2 square feet, whichever is greatest.

K.2 In addition to the requirements of the Boston City Sign Code, the Facade Improvement Program requires that the guidelines below be followed:

1. No projecting signs will be allowed for storefronts in Hyde Square.
2. The sign should fit within the lines and panels of the storefront as defined by the building frame and architectural detailing. Signs should be placed where it respects an existing sign line established by the signs on adjacent stores in the same block. Signs shall be of a consistent depth within each building block.
3. Signs should work with the materials of the facade. They must be maintained and built to withstand weathering. Painted metal is the preferred background material, and letters may be painted or individually mounted. Carved wood signs are also preferred; signs simply painted on wood are not permitted. Plastic may be used if it is carefully and strongly constructed.

4. Mass-produced, product oriented plastic signs convey a powerful corporate image and are inappropriate to the shopping street.
5. Indirect light should be used to illuminate the signs, and to draw attention to the surrounding facade. Use incandescent rather than fluorescent light sources for a truer color rendition. Internally lit plastic signs are also permitted under the guidelines.
6. Colors should be limited in number and should complement the colors used in the rest of the facade. Avoid glossy backgrounds as they reflect glare and reduce legibility. Signs directed toward pedestrians can make use of subtle color relationships, shading, outlining, and borders.
7. Signs painted on the windows of stores must be professionally designed and painted.
8. Neon signs are permitted within store, shop, tavern and restaurant windows.
9. All sign designs and installation details must be approved by the Hyde Square Design Review Committee.

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